

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1186

SECDEF IMMEDIATE

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

S E C R E T LONDON 07444

DOD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, US, NATO

SUBJECT: NATO COOPERATION AND STANDARDIZATION

REF: STATE 113399

1. SECRETARY MASON'S MAY 8 LETTER TO SECRETARY
SCHLESINGER (REFTEL), CONVEYING CONCLUSIONS ON U.S. -
EUROPEAN DEFENSE STANDARDIZATION REACHED AT THE MAY 7
EURO GROUP MEETING IN LONDON AND INVITING A U.S. RESPONSE
AT THE MAY 22-23 DPC, APPEARS TO OFFER THE SORT OF OPPOR-
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TUNITY THE U.S. AND NATO HAVE LONG BEEN SEEKING TO BEGIN

RATIONALIZING R & D AND PROCUREMENT IN THE ALLIANCE. IT SHOULD NOT BE MISSED.

2. FOR THE FIRST TIME THE EUROPEANS APPEAR TO BE "THINKING BIG" IN EQUIPMENT PROCUREMENT. TO BE SURE, ENTHUSIASM FOR THE EURO GROUP APPROACH IS GREATER IN SOME CAPITALS THAN OTHERS, AND FRANCE REMAINS A NOTABLE ABSENTEE. NEVERTHELESS, WE CONSIDER THIS INITIATIVE AN IMPORTANT ONE THAT SHOULD BE WELCOMED AND SUPPORTED STRONGLY BY THE U.S.

3. RATIONALIZATION - INCLUDING BOTH COOPERATIVE R & D AND STANDARDIZATION - IS A CONCEPT WHOSE TIME CLEARLY HAS COME. DEFENSE COSTS HAVE ESCALATED TO THE POINT WHERE ALL NATO DEFENSE MINISTERS ARE COMING TO ACCEPT THE NEED TO TAKE MAJOR STEPS TO INCREASE COST EFFECTIVENESS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THE CAPABILITIES OF ALLIANCE FORCES AND EQUIPMENT. PROPOSALS LIKE STATE-DEFENSE SPONSORED CALLAGHAN STUDY (STATE 40510) HAVE BEEN READ AND DISCUSSED HERE WITH GREAT INTEREST AS POSSIBLE VEHICLES FOR A MAJOR MULTILATERAL MOVE TOWARD BOTH STANDARDIZATION AND FORCE IMPROVEMENT. TODAY'S ECONOMIST (MAY 17) CARRIES A FULL-PAGE LEADER ON NATO WEAPONS PROCUREMENT, POINTING UP CURRENT PROBLEMS AND CALLING FOR NATO TO ADDRESS URGENTLY BOTH STANDARDIZATION AND DIVISION OF LABOR IN ARMS PRODUCTION.

4. THE EURO GROUP INITIATIVE IS A DIRECT RESPONSE TO THIS SITUATION AND BUILDS ON SECRETARY SCHLESINGER'S DECLARATION LAST WINTER THAT RATIONALIZATION MUST BE A "TWO-WAY STREET." IT ALSO REFLECTS A PERCEPTION BY EUROPEAN LEADERS THAT U.S. MILITARY AND CONGRESSIONAL RESERVATIONS TOWARD STANDARDIZATION ON ANYTHING BUT U.S. EQUIPMENT MAY BE CHANGING.

5. THE TIMING OF THE MASON APPROACH IS FORTUITOUS, FOR IT GIVES US AN OPENING TO RESPOND PROMPTLY AT THE DPC WHILE THE EURO GROUP DISCUSSIONS ARE STILL FRESH IN MINISTERIAL MINDS AND BEFORE CHAUVINISTIC PRESSURES HERE BEGIN TO INCREASE. A POSITIVE, IMAGINATIVE U.S. RESPONSE

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AT THE DPC (THAT COULD INCLUDE, FOR EXAMPLE, A PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A BODY OF NATIONAL OFFICIALS AT THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY LEVEL RESPONSIBLE FOR NATO RATIONALIZATION) COULD ACCELERATE THE MOVEMENT AND PLACE THE U.S. IN A POSITION TO GUIDE THE ALLIES TOWARD ACHIEVEMENT OF IMPROVED NATO FORCE CAPABILITY, NOT THE MAINTENANCE OF PRESENT CAPABILITIES AT REDUCED COST.

6. THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS STRONGLY THAT THE U.S. ACCEPT THE EURO GROUP CHALLENGE FOR AN EARLY, MASSIVE ATTACK ON NATO DESTANDARDIZATION AND THAT SECRETARY SCHLESINGER WEIGH IN HEAVILY TO THIS END NEXT WEEK WITH HIS FELLOW DEFENSE MINISTERS IN BRUSSELS.

RICHARDSON

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